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LOGAN COUNTY COURTHOUSE

Today's visitors are discovering the county's rich and colorful history.

Long a center of extensive coal mining and logging, Logan County is welcoming visitors eager to experience its rugged beauty and explore its rich and colorful history.

Located in the southwestern part of West Virginia, the county was created in 1824 from parts of four Virginia counties – Giles, Tazewell, Cabell and Kanawha – and named for Logan, the famous chief of the Mingo Tribe that inhabited the region before the arrival of the first white settlers.

Logan was friendly and cooperative with the settlers until 1774, when a mob of them attacked and massacred his own family. He then led his Mingo tribesmen in a bloody campaign of vengeance.

The county seat originally was named Lawnsville in honor of Anthony Lawson, who had a trading post in the area. In 1853, the Virginia General Assembly

chartered the town as Aracoma, the name of Chief Cornstalk's daughter. When the U.S. Post Office established the county's first mail route, it identified the town as Logan Courthouse. Finally, in 1907, the name was officially shortened to simply Logan.

Over the decades, Logan has had four courthouses. The first, a log structure, was destroyed by marauding Union troops who set it ablaze on May 1, 1864. In 1870, a new brick courthouse was constructed. It was used until 1904, when it was demolished and a new stone courthouse was erected. It burned in 1911 and in 1913 was replaced by a building that would serve the county for more than 50 years. After falling into disrepair, it was replaced by the current courthouse.

Constructed in 1964-65 at the Stratton Street site of its predecessors, the current courthouse is a contemporary design that's a sharp contrast to the Neoclassic

By James E. Casto

structure it replaced. The interior, too, is of modern design. The wood-paneled courtroom is lined with portraits of past judges.

Circuit Judge Roger L. Perry said he remembers when, as a lad of 10 years or so, he was part of a crowd gathered outside the third courthouse to watch youngsters compete in a hula hoop contest. At the time, he of course had no idea that as an adult he would spend much of his life in and around the current courthouse.

As a young man, Perry worked as a county health department sanitarian and was in and out of the courthouse. Later, he earned his law degree from West Virginia University and returned to the county as an assistant prosecutor, and then prosecutor. He became judge in 1993 and has remained on the bench ever since.

“I think my years of service at the courthouse may date back longer than anyone else’s,” he said.

The current courthouse was built with a combination of federal and county money, and in the 1990s a similar combination of federal and state dollars paid

for straightening and widening U.S. 119 (Appalachian Corridor G), making the once-isolated region more accessible than ever.

Each year Chief Logan State Park welcomes thousands of travelers from elsewhere in West Virginia and more distant locales, as well.

Located four miles north of the town of Logan, the 4,000-acre park is one of the most visited in the state park system. It features a 25-site campground, wildlife center, miles of hiking trails, a swimming pool with water slide, tennis, miniature golf, picnic shelters and playgrounds and an amphitheater that stages an outdoor production of “The Aracoma Story,” each summer, which is a tragic tale based on the life and legend of Cornstalk’s daughter.

If camping is not your thing, the nearby Chief Logan Lodge, Hotel and Conference Center offers 75 modern rooms and suites.

The Museum in the Park is a great place to learn about the region’s history and culture, including the 1921 Battle of Blair Mountain, a landmark event in

The Hatfield-McCoy Trails, a nationally known trail system, is four-wheeler friendly with an abundance of terrain for outdoor enthusiasts.



COURTESY OF HATFIELD-MCCOY TRAILS



Chief Logan State park offers something for everyone from the campground, Chief Logan Lodge, Hotel and Conference Center and the Museum in the Park.

American Labor history and the famous Hatfield and McCoy feud.

Today, the names of the two feuding families have been applied to the Hatfield-McCoy Trails, a multi-county system of more than 500 miles that winds its way through a challenging expanse of southern West Virginia real estate. For a growing number of Logan County visitors, the busy trail is the lure. The trail and its ATV-friendly towns welcome four-wheelers, dirt bikes and utility vehicles.

After hitting the trail, you can visit the Devil himself at the Hatfield Family Cemetery at Sara Ann, just south of Logan, where a life-sized monument marks the final resting place of legendary Devil Anse Hatfield.

Tourism is obviously a bright spot in the county's future.

Joan Tomblin, president of Southern West Virginia Community and Technical College sees other bright spots, as well.

"In the past, many West Virginia families didn't see the value in education," Tomblin said. "But today

there's a growing recognition that it's essential. And so at Southern we welcome students who are attending college for the first time, those returning after many years and those who need customized training for their specific business or industry."

Job training is a core part of Southern's mission, she said. As an example, she points to the college's Academy for Mine Training and Energy Technologies. With the current downturn in the coal market, "new hires in the mining industry are few, but the need for training is bigger than ever."

Tomblin said for three years running Washington Monthly magazine ranked Southern as No. 14 on its list of the nation's 50 best community colleges. **WVLT**

James E. Casto is the retired associate editor of *The Herald-Dispatch*, and the author of a number of books on local and regional history.